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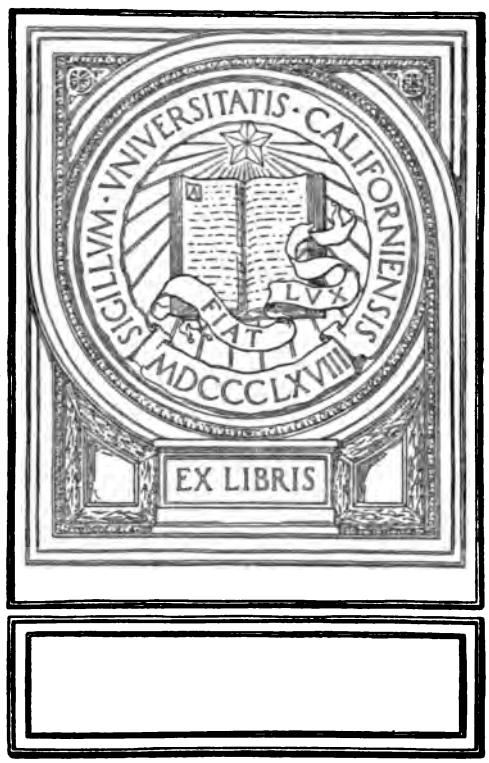

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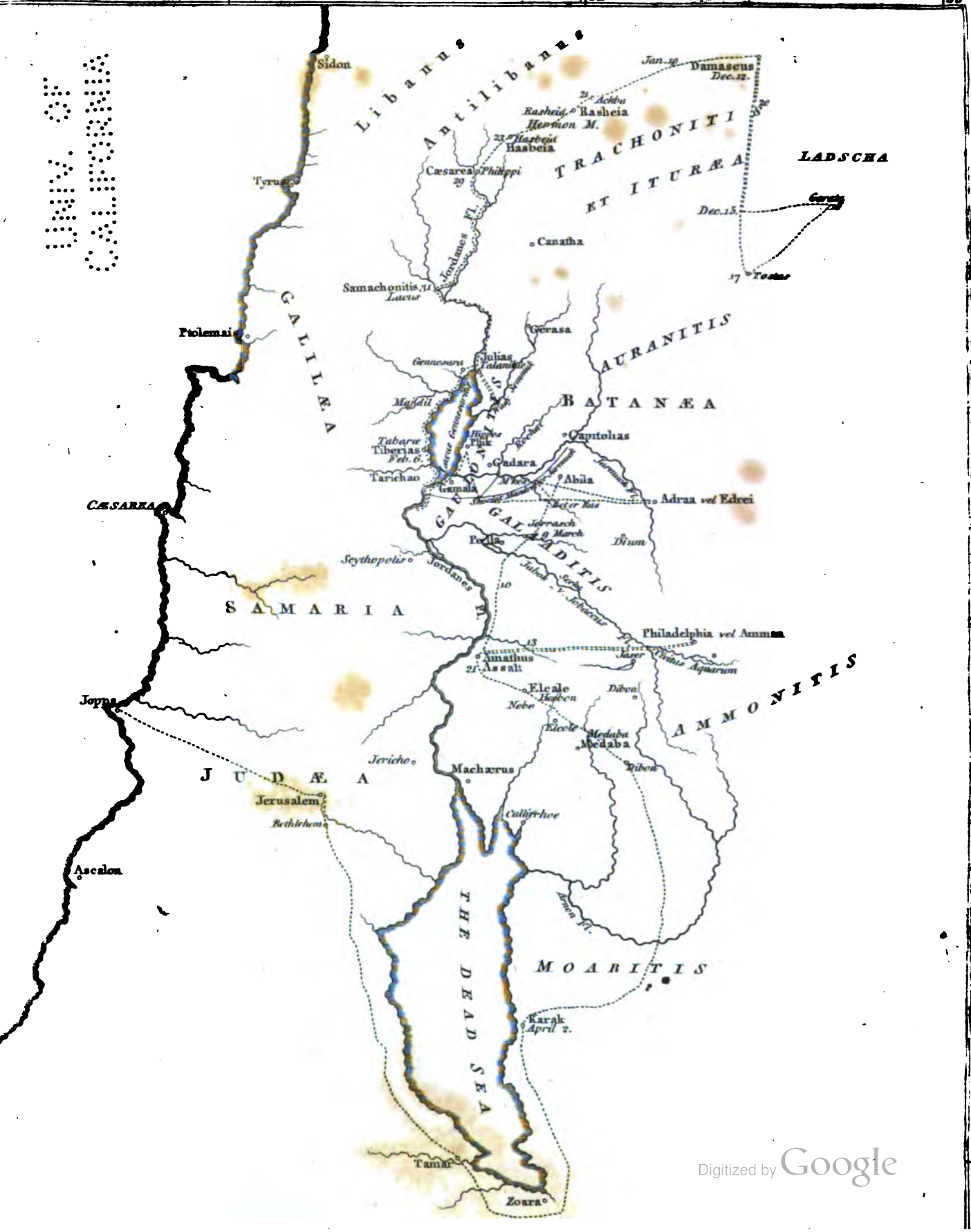

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A

BRIEF ACCOUNT

OF

THE COUNTRIES

ADJOINING

THE LAKE of TIBERIAS, THE JORDAN,

AND

The Dead Sea.

BY

M. SEETZEN,

CONCEILLER D'AMBASSADE DE S. M. L'EMPEREUR DE RUSSIE.

PUBLISHED FOR THE PALESTINE ASSOCIATION OF LONDON.

BATH:

PRINTED AND SOLD BY MEYLER AND SON, ABBEY-CHURCH-YARD;

AND IN LONDON BY HATCHARD, PICCADILLY.

1810.

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PREFACE.

IT has been much the custom of late to publish travels through remote parts of the world; and the more unknown and unfrequented the country described, the more eagerness has been manifested by the public to read and be informed: It is not therefore deemed necessary to apologise for offering the following pages to the English public, since, strange though it be, few countries are so completely unknown to all Europeans, as those parts of the land of Judea which have been visited by Mr. Seetzen.

Whilst a new world beyond the Atlantic has been frequently described and delineated in authentic maps; whilst the unproductive regions of Siberia, and the deserts of Africa, have been penetrated by modern hardihood and curiosity; the land which *might* be called the oldest portion of the globe, or concerning

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which at least the oldest authentic history exists; where the seeds of Christianity were first sown, and where the author of our religion lived, and taught, is comparatively neglected and unknown.

A small part of Palestine has indeed been frequently visited by Europeans who have been led thither by motives of curiosity or devotion; but their view has been confined to the beaten-track from Yaffa, or Akka to Jerusalem and Bethlehem: even this part has not been described with the minuteness and precision that might be desired, and all the rest of the country has been left in complete obscurity.

To remove as much as possible this obscurity, is the principal object of the Society of London, called "The Palestine Association." It is their intention to publish from time to time such information as they can procure respecting the present state of the Holy Land. They have sent a respectable and confidential Foreigner to Jerusalem, with whom they are in correspondence; and they take this opportunity of requesting the co-operation of all those who may feel an interest in removing the present ignorance respecting Palestine;* an ignorance which,

* We use the word Palestine not in its confined sense of a province or part of Judea, but in its most extended sense, as comprehending all the countries on either side of the river Jordan, inhabited by the Tribes of Israel.

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independent of all religious consideration, is discreditable to an age of learning and inquiry.

They request that all persons, whether Members of the Society or not, will communicate to them, through their Secretary,† whatever information they may possess concerning the present state of these regions. If any Mariner or Merchant has had opportunities of ascertaining correctly the latitude and longitude of towns or villages within that district, either on the coast or in the interior, their communications will be thankfully received; since the maps which we possess are known to be extremely defective, but our acknowledged ignorance prevents at present all attempts at correction.

The following Journal, which is now presented to the Reader in an English dress, was written by M. Seetzen, Conceiller d'Embassade de S. M. l'Empereur de Russie. His letters were addressed to M. de Zach, Grand Marechal de la Cour de Saxe Gotha, &c.; and parts of them appeared at different times in the Moniteur.—Some Members of the National Institute at Paris sent over these Papers to Sir Joseph Banks, by whom they were obligingly forwarded to the Palestine Association.

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† Wm. Hamilton, esq. St. Martin's Library, Castle-street, London.

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This Journal of M. Seetzen, too brief to extinguish our curiosity, comprehends some of the most interesting objects within the plan of the Association. That gentleman has judiciously directed his principal efforts to the illustration of the remote regions beyond the Jordan, and his success has been on the whole greater than might have been expected. The general tenor moreover of the Narrative, and the disinterested manner in which it has been given to the world, have certainly no tendency to impeach the credibility of the Writer.

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Extract of a Letter from Mr. Seetzen, to Mr. Zach, Grand Marshall of the Court of Saxe Gotha, and Editor of the Geographical and Astronomical Correspondence.

St. John d'Acre, 16th June, 1806.

SIX months have passed since, by my letter from Damascus, I transmitted to you some information regarding the continuation of my journey, accompanied with observations on the country of Haurân, the Auranitis of the ancients, of Jaulân, Gaulonitis, and on the celebrated double chain of mountains called Libanus and Antilibanus. I subjoined to the same letter my astronomical observations made at Damascus, and the sequel to the list of the Oriental works on geography and astronomy to be found in the library of Gotha. I hope that the whole will have reached you by the care of Mr. Hammer, at Constantinople.

I have since made a fatiguing and dangerous journey, accompanied with many singular adventures, of which I propose now to give you some details.

I knew from the most ancient historical works of the Hebrews, that from the most remote antiquity there existed many flourishing cities in the country to the east of Hermon, the Jordan, and the Dead Sea. Those cities and their territories were, perhaps

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improperly, termed kingdoms; yet they were justly celebrated for the excellent cultivation of their soil, and for a great number of towns and fortified places.

The Romans, who successively extended their conquests in these regions, found there a very populous country, known under the names of Moabitis, Ammonitis, Amoritis, Galaaditis, Batanea, Auranitis, &c. The places in the southern part of that country were then distinguished by the general name of Peræa, and among them was reckoned the celebrated Decapolis, or ten allied cities [a] The Romans left there, as in all the countries they conquered, superb remains of their architecture, the stamp of their genius and of their desire to be immortalized; and it has not been possible for a series of fifteen centuries to efface entirely these vestiges of their greatness.

In the time of the Roman empire of the west, and under the Christian Emperors of Constantinople, this country appears still to have subsisted in all its vigour, if we may judge from the great number of Bishoprics, Archbishoprics, Convents and Churches which it contained, and of which the names are mentioned in the history of Byzantium (acta Byzantina); but on the decline of the Greek empire, the people which inhabited it seems to have been dispersed, or destroyed when the Califs extended their conquests over that region.

I have in vain consulted the geographical books of the Arabs, to discover some light on the modern state of this country.—Even Busching, in his Geography of Syria and Palestine, gives only vague notices. We must therefore conclude that modern travellers have not judged these districts sufficiently worthy of their attention, to prosecute their researches there.

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The desire of supplying this defect induced me to undertake this journey, notwithstanding the opposition of my friends at Damascus, who represented to me the execution of it as at once dangerous and impracticable.

I was told, among other things, that I should find deserts impossible to traverse, for want of communication with the inhabitants of the frontiers; that the Arabs would not suffer me to continue my route, and that even my life would be in danger among these savage hordes, &c. &c. But no one had visited the country in person, and most of the information given me was founded only on report, perhaps false, or at least exaggerated. Besides, I had too good an opinion of the nomade Arabs to permit myself to be deterred by such reports; and I thought it would be rendering service to science, if I became competent to give the public certain intelligence of the present state of Decapolis, its antiquities, plants, minerals, &c.

But before I commenced this journey, I resolved to visit another little district, to the north east of Haurân, and which, according to public report, should contain some remarkable antiquities. This district is called al-Lahja, and is of bad repute at Damascus, on account of the Bedouin Arabs who occupy it.— I had already three times engaged guides to accompany me; but each time, at the moment of departure, their fears made them turn their backs.

I at length found an Armenian, formerly in the service of Jezzâr, Pasha of Acre, where he had opportunity to become familiar with danger. Being well armed, we left Damascus on horseback, the 12th of December, 1805, on the route to Lahja.

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We lost the road on the first day, and passed the night in a Mohammedan village, where we were received as soldiers of the Pasha. Under this title my conductor assumed a tone of authority, which imposed on the inhabitants, who are very much in fear of the military. The following day we pursued the great road to Haurân, and on the third day, as we arrived at the first village of Haurân, we made a détour, which brought us into the road to Lahja.

I had provided myself with a passport from Abd-allah, Pasha of Damascus, by means of which my conductor, Ibrahim, obliged the Shech of each village to furnish an armed horseman, who accompanied us to the next. We lived on the road, according to the custom of the country, at the charge of the inhabitants; which, however, did not prevent Ibrahim from displaying his anger, as often as he thought the presents offered him less than he was entitled to. I saw that I had engaged a daring fellow, whose conduct might have endangered my safety, if he had not been taken for a soldier and a Mohammedan.

The part of Lahja which I have seen, like Haurân, presents nothing but basalt, often very porus, and forming in many places stoney deserts. The villages, for the most part ruinous, are situated on the sides of the rocks. Their black basaltic colour, the houses, churches and towers crumbling to decay, joined with the total absence of trees and verdure, give them a sombrous and melancholy aspect, inspiring the soul with a kind of terror.—Almost every village exhibits either Greek inscriptions or columns, or some other remains of antiquity. I have copied among others, an inscription of the Emperor Marcus Aurelius Antoninus. The entrances here, as well as in Haurân, are closed

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with doors of basaltes. Christians of the Greek ritual are still found in Lahja, as in every part of the east.

On the 16th December, 1805, we set out for Gerata, a large village, almost destroyed, where remains are still found of the Roman æra, and of that of the Greek Emperors of Constantinople. The road which leads thither traverses a rocky soil, arid, and quite uncultivated; in the middle of which there is a round and deep cavity, much resembling the crater of a volcano, being surrounded with black and porous basalt. It was in this cavity, which contains some springs, that we perceived a number of horsemen. We took them for Arabs, and the peasant who was our guide, being of the same opinion, advised us to be on our guard.

On our arrival at Gerata, we found an Arab Shech, with a small troop which had taken up its abode there for some time. On the presentation of our passport (Boiûrdî), he received us very hospitably, and caused a simple and rustic repast to be prepared for us, though it was then the month Ramadhân, at which time the Mohammedans take no food till after sun-set.

I had scarcely recovered from the fatigue of travelling, when I observed a troop of ten horsemen coming up to us, who were in the service of the Vice-Governor of Haurân,[b] Jaulân, Lahja, &c. They were armed with sabres, pistols, spears, and battle-axes. They announced to me in a civil manner, that they came to take me into custody by order of Omar Aga, their master; who having learned that I had already visited that part of the country in the preceding spring, and supposing that my passports might be false, and that I was no other than a spy, had given them orders to stop me, and conduct me to his presence.

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I yielded to necessity without any apprehension, though a little vexed at the disappointment; persuaded that the passport of the Pasha, his superior, would be sufficient to secure me from every kind of violence.

We set out surrounded by five horsemen, and advanced a day and an half into Hautân, where we found Omar Aga, in the village of Tostas, near Meserib, situated on the route of the Mekkè caravan. He received us at first in a manner somewhat rude; but as soon as he had read my passport, his conduct was changed. I immediately became his guest, and he conducted me himself to see a Greek inscription in the village.

The following day I was desirous of quitting Tostas, to return to Lahja; but Ibrahim refused to accompany me, in consequence of a conversation which he had had the preceding evening with Omar Aga, whose intentions appeared to him liable to suspicion. This adventure having caused me to lose the time which I had set apart for the journey to Lahja, I yielded, and began to give up my design.

Omar Aga had promised that I should be accompanied by the Shech of the village; but this Shech did not shew himself, and we had scarcely lost sight of the village, when two men on horseback passed by us rapidly. This excited distrust; and our suspicions were confirmed, when towards noon we saw before us, in a very solitary place, eight Arab horsemen armed, one of whom came galloping towards us, and brandishing his spear. Ibrahim had just dismounted in order to adjust his saddle. He declared that when he saw the Arab so near, he had called out to me to be on my guard, and that he had pointed his gun at him, ordering him to stop.

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I had been too far off to hear him, and was engaged in observing the other seven Arabs, whom I had not yet noticed. The first stopped short, and fixing his spear in the earth, inquired whence we came, and where we proposed to go. The moment Ibrahim had informed him that we came from Omar Aga, and were going to Damascus, they pursued their route without molesting us. It was probably the intention of Omar Aga that we should be plundered; and the firmness of my guide had perhaps restrained the robbers. At length on the 20th December we returned to Damascus.

It was indeed my intention to commence my journey along the eastern side of the Jordan, and round the Dead Sea to Jerusalem, immediately after my return. But I was detained by the difficulty of finding a proper guide. Several presented themselves, whose services, however, I had sufficient reasons for declining. My host, the estimable Mr. Chaboceau, a French physician, had before provided an attendant for my excursion to Lahja, whom, on examination, I found very well suited to my purpose. But at the moment of departure, he hesitated, and retracted his engagement. The advantageous offer which I made him overcame his repugnancy, and he resolved to accompany me. As I shall often have to speak of him in the sequel, it is proper that I should first give a short account of him.

Yussuf al Mulki was born about fifty years ago at Damascus, where he is still established in the Christian quarter. He is of the Greek ritual. In his fifteenth year he travelled with a merchant of Damascus among the Arabs of the tribe of Anazé; and has since carried on trade on his own account with many other tribes of Arabs, among whom he in this manner passed near thirty years. And as during that time he had had occasion to visit

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most parts of the country where I proposed to travel, he was in a situation to render me the most essential services.

We left Damascus the 19th January, 1806. The whole of my baggage consisted only of a few clothes; some books that were indispensible; a small provision of medicines, to give credit to my supposed character of physician; a parcel of paper without gum, to preserve plants; some provisions, &c. I wore the habit of an Arab Shech of the second rank, and armed myself with a gun, and a brace of pistols.

The two districts which I first visited were those of Rashéia and Hasbéia, they being the least known of all Syria. They are situated at the foot of mount Hermon, the summit of which, at that time covered with snow, rises above all the other mountains in the neighbourhood. It is now called Gebel-ez-Shech (the Shech's mountain).

The season did not permit me to ascend its summit, to examine the nature of the rock which composes it. I have however reason to think that it consists of calcareous stone, like the snowy tops of Libanus and Anti-Libanus, which we were obliged to cross in going to Rashaïad. From the most elevated points of that ridge, we saw the Mediterranean; and after descending on the other side of the mountain, we reached Asha, a village inhabited by the Druses and Greek Christians. I found there the ruins of a Roman temple, consisting of a single column of the peristyle of the Ionic order, and the best execution.

In the evening of the second day's travelling we arrived at Rashéia, a village situated on the steep declivity of a mountain. It is the residence of an Emîr, whose authority extends over

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twenty other villages, and whom I visited the following day.—Continual rain detained us there during two days.

The 23d January we continued our route to Hasbéia, distant five leagues to the south of Rashéia. The whole territory of these two districts is very mountainous, and there are but few traces of cultivation.

On my arrival at Hasbéia, I alighted at the house of the learned Greek Bishop of Sûr or Séide, for whom I had a letter of recommendation. This village is somewhat larger than Rashéia, but like it situated on the steep descent of a mountain. I had a letter for the Emìr who commands there, and who inhabits a castle of handsome structure. I paid him a visit the day after my arrival.

The mountains of the neighbourhood are for the most part calcareous, and in the bottoms of the hills are seen strata of trap. The object the most remarkable in the mineralogy, is a mine of asphaltes, at the distance of a league west south west of Hasbéia. It is on the side of a calcareous mountain, and has been wrought near two centuries. The asphaltes extracted from it is called al-hommar, and it is used here to secure the vines from insects.—The greater part of it is transported to Europe.

Two days after our arrival, we left Hasbéia, on our way to Baniass, or Panaass, the ancient Cesarèa Philippi. This city, formerly so flourishing, is now destroyed, and on its ruins has arisen a little hamlet of about twenty miserable huts, inhabited by Mohammedans. The circuit of the walls of the ancient city is easily distinguishable; but no traces remain of the magnificent temple erected by Herod the Great in honour of Augustus.

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The copious source of the river of Baniass rises near a remarkable grotto in the rock, on the declivity of which I copied some ancient Greek inscriptions, dedicated to Pan and the Nymphs of the Fountain.

The environs of Baniass are very pleasing, especially for a lover of the chace, as there are panthers, bears, a prodigious quantity of wild boars, foxes, jackalls, antelopes, roebucks, wolves, hyænas, hares, &c.

The little lake of Phiala is two leagues distant to the east of Baniass, and now bears the name of Birket-el-Ram.

The castle of Baniass, situated on the summit of a lofty mountain, was built in the time of the Chalifs.

The ancients gave the name of *source of the Jordan*, to the spring from which the Baniass rises; and its beauty might entitle it to that name. But in fact it appears that the preference is due to the spring of the river Hasberia, which rises half a league to the west of Hasbéia, and which forms the largest branch of the Jordan. The spring of Tel-el-Kadi, which the natives take for the source of the Jordan, is that which least merits the name.(c)

We left Baniass the 29th January, and passed several small branches of the Jordan, in order to reach its western bank; some particular circumstances, which I shall afterwards relate, having prevented me from examining its western bank as far as the bridge called Jusr-behat-Yakûb.*

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* Jacob's Bridge.

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The surrounding mountains in this place form a valley, rather extensive, but little cultivated, called el-Hhulé, in the midst of which is situated a marshy lake, bearing the name of Baheiret-el-Hhulé. It is the lake Méron, or Samachonitis of the ancients. Its shores are frequented by a great number of wild boars, and the huntsmen had just been setting fire to the rushes and reeds which surround it, the flame of which was visible at night.

We passed that night and the ensuing day under the tents of a village which consists of nomade Mohammedans, who range the country like the Bedouin Arabs, though they at the same time engage in agriculture.

I sent back from thence my muleteers, who absolutely refused to accompany me to Jusr-behat-Yakûb, from the fear of being deprived of their mules. But what more surprized me was the conduct of my guide Yussuf, who declared that he could not possibly follow me to the eastern bank of the Jordan, and the lake of Tiberias;† that he had a wife and children to whom his care and assistance were due, and that if I persisted in my design, he was determined to leave me and return to Damascus.

Not choosing therefore either to renounce my plan, or to lose my guide, no alternative remained to me but to send him to wait for me at Tiberias, by the high road; while I advanced alone towards Jusr-behat-Yakûb, in order to find an opportunity of passing to the eastern side of the Jordan.

I consigned my money, watch, pistols, &c. to Yussuf; keeping only a bundle of paper to preserve plants, and my gun. In this

† Baheiret Tabarié.

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manner I commenced my pedestrian journey, the 31st January, accompanied by an Arab guide, whom the Shech of the nomade village had recommended to me. The road followed always the western bank of the lake Baheiret-el-Hhulé, and the foot of lofty calcareous mountains.

At some distance from the bridge we met a troop of Arabs, who, if my guide had not been present, would probably have plundered me. The bridge over the Jordan is built of fragments of basalt, and well preserved. The river is in that place about thirty-five paces in width. On the eastern side is seen a khan, which was almost entirely demolished at the time the French invaded Syria. I found there, however, a little garrison, with a Collector of the Tolls éxacted on crossing the river. It was there I passed the night.

I had but little hope of finding at this place any person who might serve me as a guide, since every one was fearful of the Arabs, and no one would risk his mule or his horse. Good luck, however, brought an Arab on the following day to the spot where I was, who understanding that I was a medical man, requested me to come with him to see his Shech, who was attacked by the ophthalmia, and who lived on the eastern bank of the lake of Tiberias.

I readily availed myself of the opportunity which was thus presented, resolved to attempt any thing rather than to abandon my undertaking. I gave myself up therefore to the guidance of this stranger. The country that we passed through was wild, mountainous, and entirely composed of basalt. It was the western border of the district of Jaulân. After walking about two hours we arrived at a little nomade village, where lived my guide,

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Hossein, and where we passed the night. The next day he got me a horse for the little money which I had remaining, and we continued our journey. From the high ground that we travelled over, I had a very fine view of the lake of Tiberias. We afterwards passed through the little village of Tallanihié, probably the ancient Julias, and situated on the edge of a small fertile plain which extends as far as the lake, and seems to owe its origin to the Jordan. In the village itself I saw a great number of Aloes, which grow there in the open air, a circumstance which I had not remarked before.

From hence we followed an eastern course which led us to the southern bank of a river called Wady Sammak, which is tolerably deep at this season, but in summer time completely dry. I saw here some tents, in one of which we found the sick Shech.

I was welcomed in the Arab manner, and began immediately to examine the eyes of the Shech, but I discovered that a complete cataract was formed, which is almost impossible to be cured without an operation. The situation however in which I was placed obliged me to dissemble, and I therefore gave him some cheering hopes. He said to me "If you restore my sight, I will make you a present of the horse on which you ride." This certainly was not a very noble gift, for the horse was so sorry a beast, that with the greatest difficulty could I get him to a trot. I returned however my thanks to the Shech, and assured him that I wished for no recompense, but that he should allow me to be conducted along the eastern bank of the lake as far as Tiberias; in which route I was anxious to seek for some plants. "Give me, said I, Hossein for a guide, and be satisfied that on my arrival at Tiberias, I will give him such remedies, as with the aid of God, will

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restore your eye-sight." The first of these conditions seemed to displease him, but at length I was promised what I asked.

I mounted my horse next morning, and we set off together. After travelling half an hour, I perceived that we were retracing our road towards Tallanihie, and I complained of it to Hossein, which indeed was all I could do, for under the pretence of protecting me more fully, he had in the morning got possession of my gun, and we were also attended by another very stout Arab; all resistance was therefore absurd.

We passed the Jordan near a village, and coasted along the borders of the lake of Tiberias. At a little distance from the khan Beit-Zeidé, we passed a brook, the water of which was salt. We stopped near the khan, it was uninhabited, and nearly in ruins. Hossein had lost his cloak, and under the pretence of looking for it, and immediately returning, he took my horse and gun, and left me absolutely *alone*; for the other Arab, and the wife of the sick Shech who had been of the party, were also gone off.

I waited for some time, but to no effect, I was yet three leagues from Tiberias; the country was solitary and uninhabited; the little plain which extends from hence to Majdil was covered with brush wood. The night was approaching, and convinced that Hossein had treacherously deserted me, I thought only of escaping from a place so full of danger. In proceeding a little further I was on the point of falling into the hands of two Arabs who were concealed in the wood; I fortunately however escaped from them, and arrived an hour after sun-set in the little Mahommedan village of Majdil, situated on the bank of the lake, where I passed the night. The next morning I arrived happily at Tiberias, or Tabarié of the Arabs, and found there my former guide Yussuf,

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who, had been waiting for me some days, not without apprehensions for my safety.

The town of Tiberias is situated close to the banks of the lake that bears its name—and on the land side it is encircled by a strong wall of hewn stones of basalt, notwithstanding which it hardly merits the name of a town. There are no traces left of its ancient splendor, though the ruins of the old town are discoverable, which extend as far as the hot-baths, situated about a league to the East. The famous Jezzar Pasha built a bath above the principal of these springs. If these baths were in Europe, they would probably be preferred to all others.(d) The valley in the midst of which is the lake, assists by the concentration of heat, the vegetation of dates, citrons, oranges, indigo, &c. while the higher land in the neighbourhood is capable of furnishing the produce of temperate climates. But in the present state of things, one can only find a few traces of fruits of the solar regions, on the edge of the lake. The lake abounds also in fish, but we discovered only one fisherman's boat, and that nearly in ruins, at Tiberias. He who farms the fishery of the lakes, only employs his nets along its banks.

On the 6th of February we pursued our journey, and followed the banks of the lake as far as its southward extremity, to the westward of which was situated the ancient town of Tarichæa, celebrated for its salt fish, its place is very exactly marked in the map of Professor Paulus.* Some ruins and some walls are still visible, and the place still bears the name of el-Malahha, or Ard-el-Malahha, which is synonimous to the Greek name of Tarichæa. We observed on the borders of the lake, a considerable

* The map here alluded to seems to be the same as that of D'Anville.

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space without any vegetation, and which is covered in summer with a surface of salt. The inhabitants of Tarichæa probably make use of this salt, to cure the quantities of fish, with which the lake and the Jordan supply them.

Here begins the beautiful plain of el-Ghôr, which greatly resembles the plain of el-B'kaa, between Anti-Libanus, and Libanus, only that the two chains of mountains that surround it are not so striking as those of el-B'kaa.

This plain of el-Ghôr is little cultivated, nor are any villages to be found in it, except those of nomade Arabs, who move their tents about from one spot to another.

At a certain distance to the south of el-Malabha is a bridge in ruins on the eastern bank of the Jordan, and after walking some leagues, we passed over the Shariat-Manadra, or Shariah-Mandra, by a bridge of five arches, which river after flowing through a bed of basalt, here empties itself into the Jordan.

At half a league from this place we came to the bridge of Jissr-el-Mejamea, built upon the Jordan, to the westward of which is a very large khan, with a small garrison.

It is here necessary to observe, that the river Shariat-Manadra, is the same as that sometimes called Hieramack, or Yarmak, and that its course is ill laid down in the map of Mons. Paulus, since it does not empty itself into the lake of Tiberias, but into the Jordan, at some leagues below the southern point of the lake.—Some other geographical corrections will be found in the progress of my tour.

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We returned to the southern point of the lake without passing the bridge of Jissr-el-Mejamea, and spent the night in a Mahommedan village.—The next day we directed our course towards the village of Phik, situated on the east bank of the lake of Tiberias, in the district of Jaulân.—This village being placed on a considerable eminence, we were obliged to climb a rugged mountain, on the summit of which we found a khan in ruins, called Khan el Akaba Phik.

Comparing the localities of this place, with the picturesque description of Josephus, in his "History of the Jewish War with the Romans," I thought it possible that this was the situation of the town of Gamala, which defended itself with so much obstinacy against the Romans. On the map of Mons. Paulus, the town of Gamala is placed on the southern side of the Shariat Manadra, which (if my conjecture be correct) must be an error.(e)

The village of Phik is near the middle of the lake; and as, during my visit to the blind Shech, I had never been more than a few leagues from it, I had now completed my design of visiting the eastern bank.

I could not obtain any information concerning Hippos, one of the towns which, according to the map of Mons. Paulus, should be situated in the neighbourhood of Phik. I was equally unsuccessful respecting Capitolias and Pella.

Being at Phik, I was anxious to visit the ruins of M'kess, situated on a considerable mountain on the southern side of the Shariat Manadra.—But I found it impossible to obtain a companion, so much are the inhabitants of this county fearful of

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the Arabs. The natives here were acquainted with Amatha, and said it was a place in ruins, in the valley of Shariat Manadra, about three leagues from Phik.

We had determined to go and visit the district of el-Botthin, which the Shariat-Manadra separates from the district of Jaulân, but the river was so swoln by the rain that it was impossible to pass through it, and bridge there was none.

We were, therefore, obliged to discontinue our journey till the 12th of February, when we directed our course to the spot where the little river Roshat, which flows from the north, falls into the Shariat-Manadra.

We forded both rivers, and Yussuf, who was afraid of the rapidity of the current, recommended himself with the utmost fervor to the holy virgin.

Arrived safe on the opposite shore, we were hospitably regaled by a troop of Arabs.—We afterwards traversed a great wood of beech trees, and arrived on the 15th of February at the village of el-Hoessan, where we lodged with a Greek Christian.

I had intended from hence to visit the ancient town of Edrei, now called Draa, and the two decapolitan cities of Abila, now Abil, and Gadara.—The first of these places, Edrei, is often mentioned in the Hebrew scriptures, as one of the most important towns in the territory of the king of Basan, who in the time of Moses lived at Astaroth, the present Busra. But the country was so infected by the nomade Arabs, that I could procure neither horse, nor mule, nor ass. Yussuf even declared to me a second time that he could not venture to go with me. It was not with-

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out great difficulty that I at last found a guide; but to save the only coat which I had to my back, and which the Arabs would not have failed to have taken from me, I was obliged to make use of a precaution sufficiently strange, which was to cover myself with rags, in fact to assume the disguise of a mesloch, or common beggar. That nothing about me might tempt the rapacity of the Arabs, I put over my shirt an old kombaz, or dressing gown, and above that an old blue and ragged shift—I covered my head with some shreds, and my feet with old slippers. An old tattered Abbai, thrown over my shoulders, protected me from the cold and rain, and a branch of a tree served me for a walking stick.—My guide, a Greek Christian, put on nearly the same dress, and in this trim we traversed the country during ten days, often stopped by the cold rains which wetted us to the skin—I was also obliged to walk one whole day in the mud with my feet bare, since it was impossible to use my slippers on that marshy land, completely softened by the water.

The town of Draa, situated on the eastern side of the route of the pilgrims to Mecca, is at present uninhabited and in ruins. No remains of the beautiful ancient architecture could be found, except a sarcophagus, very well executed, which I saw near a fountain, to which it serves as a bason. Most of the houses are built with basalt.

The district of el-Botthin contains many thousand caverns made in the rocks, by the ancient inhabitants of the country. Most of the houses, even in these villages which are yet inhabited, are a kind of grotto, composed of walls placed against the projecting points of the rocks, in such a manner that the

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walls of the inner chamber, in which the inhabitants live, are partly of bare rock, and partly mason-work.

Besides these retreats, there are in this neighbourhood a number of very large caverns, the construction of which must have cost infinite labour, since they are formed in the hard rock. There is only one door of entrance, which is so regularly fitted into the rock, that it shuts like the door of a house.

It appears then that this country was formerly inhabited by Troglodytes, without reckoning the villages whose inhabitants may be regarded as such. There are still to be found many families living in caverns, sufficiently spacious to contain them and all their cattle. These immense caverns are moreover to be found, in considerable numbers, in the district of al-Jedur, some leagues to the southward of M'kess, where also we met with several families of the Troglodites.

Besides my guide I had taken with me an armed peasant, and after a troublesome walk we arrived at night at a vast natural cavern, inhabited by a Mahommedan family. After going through a wide and pretty long passage, we perceived at the other end a part of the family assembled round a fire, and employed in preparing supper, which consisted principally of a kind of bouilli, mixed with wild herbs and gruel made of wheat. I was wet through by the rain, and had walked all day barefooted. This fire was, therefore, insufficient to warm me, although the persons and cattle which came in at sun-set, filled nearly all the cavern. I should probably have passed a bad night, if the old father of the family had not kindly thought of conducting us, after supper, to another cavern at a small distance. After hav-

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ing passed a door of ordinary size, we found there all the flock of goats belonging to this Troglodite, and at the end a large empty space, where they had lighted for us the immense trunk of a tree, whose cheerful blaze invited us to sleep around it The fire was kept in all night, and the chief of this hospitable family brought us also a good mess of rice.

The first appearance of these fierce inhabitants of the rocks had given me some uneasiness, but I afterwards found that they were not more barbarous than the other peasants of these districts. The old father of this family appeared on the contrary to be a sensible and humane man.

We set off the next morning (Feb. 23) for M'kess. This town is situated in an angle of a high mountain, formed by the Shariat-Manadra, and the Wady-al-Arab. It was formerly a large and opulent town, proofs of which are still visible in remnants of marble columns, and of large buildings, in great numbers of sarcophaguses, ornamented with bas-reliefs, with carved work and with garlands, which are still tolerably well preserved. All these sarcophaguses are of basalt, which was probably brought from the district of Jaulân. Many beautiful, vast, and very remarkable caverns are still also to be found hereabouts, which serve as places of retreat for five or six families of Troglodite-Arabs.

We ventured into one of these caverns, where according to the usual custom they gave us some milk, butter, &c.

I thought there was reason to believe that M'kess was the ancient Gadara, a town of the second rank among the decapolitan cities. In the map of Mons. Paulus, Gadara is placed on the northern bank of the Shariat-Manadra—but on that side of the

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river no one could shew me any place with such a name, and no one could discover any ruins, which might evince the former ancient existence of a large and powerful town.

If the old geographers do fix the situation of Gadara on the northern side of the Sharat-Manadra, my conjecture is erroneous. Not having, however, any book of ancient geography with me, I cannot ascertain that fact. Nevertheless, as the remarkable natural objects which are found in the neighbourhood of ancient towns, determine more assuredly their situation than the transient works of men, I set myself to seek, in the environs of M'kess, for some hot springs, which were found formerly near Gadara, and I discovered them on the northern side, at a league's distance from the foot of a mountain on which M'kess stands, and on the northern bank of the Shariat-Manadra. There are three hot springs at the distance of a league from each other. The first is the most considerable, and is called Hammet-es-Shech. I was not able to examine these springs, except at a distance of two or three hundred paces, on account of the river being so much swelled by the late rains, that none of the Bedouins who live thereabouts in tents, would run the risque of conducting me across it, although I offered them money. They assured me, however, that the first hot spring about a league from M'kess, contained a great deal of sulphur, which the Arabs made use of cure the mange of their camels.

There is another circumstance which seems to confirm the opinion that M'kess is the ancient Gadara, namely, that the southern part of this country, which is filled with caverns, and where we passed the night, bears the name of al-Jêdur, which is probably derived from Jadar, or Gadara. A great part of Jaulan, called Jedur, is situated on the north side of the Shariat-Manadra. This part comprehends all the country on the eastern bank

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of the River Roshad, and extends nearly to the road travelled by the Mecca pilgrims, that is to say, as far as Haurân. It seems, therefore, that M'kess, or Gadara, is situated nearly in the middle of the district.(f)

The ruins of Abil, formerly Abila, one of the principal decapolitan cities, were situated a few leagues from hence towards the east, on the southern side of the Shariat-Manadra; but all that country was, at the moment, occupied by Arabs, of the tribe of Beni-Sahhar, who had led their flocks there.

As soon as we had left M'kess, one of these Arabs joined us, he was on horseback and armed with a spear, my guide offered him my pipe that he might smoke, he took it without any ceremony and carried it off with him, as he would probably have done with any thing we had about us, that had appeared worth his trouble. We met many other Arabs of the same tribe, employed in pasturing their camels and their sheep in the deserts, and who let us pass without any interruption. After a tolerably long walk, we arrived after sun-set at a Mohammmedan village, where we passed the night.

My guide, Aoser, was so much afraid of the Arabs of Beni-Sahhar, that he refused the next day to go on with me to Abîl, but by way of consolation, he promised to conduct me to Beit-er-Râs, a place where I subsequently found some ruins. I was obliged to be content with this offer, in the hope that I should meet there with some one to supply his place. But instead of keeping his word, he led me to the little village of Irbid, formerly a considerable town and residence of a chief of this district. This place being only two leagues from his own home at al-Hoessan, he returned thither the same day.

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With respect to myself, persisting in my determination to go to Abîl, I made an agreement with three Mohammedans to conduct me thither. They seemed very willing to accept my offers, as long as they thought I was going there to search for hidden treasure, but as soon as I honestly explained to them, that I understood nothing of treasure-hunting, and that my intention was only to seek for plants, they walked off.

I set off therefore alone for Beit-er-Râs, a village situated on a moderate elevation, inhabited by Mohammedans, and which, from some ancient remains of architecture, appears to have been once a considerable town. Here are also a number of caverns, some of which are inhabited, and others serve for barns and stables. The Shech of the village had the kindness to procure a guide for me, who conducted me to Abîl, situated a few leagues from hence to the northward. The road he led me was very little frequented—we were detained some time by two Arabs, who at length let us proceed. A little while afterwards another armed Arab came after us full gallop, but being a friend of the Shech of Beit-er-Râs, he let us go on and wished us a good journey. At last, after losing our way, we arrived at Abîl.

The town is situated in the angle of a mountain, formed by the two bases, the higher slopes of which are full of caverns. The town is completely in ruins and deserted. There is not even one single building standing; but the ruins, and the remnants attest its ancient splendor, some beautiful remains of the ancient walls are to be discovered, together with a number of arches, and of columns of marble, basalt, and grey granite. On the outside of these ancient walls I found also a great many columns, two of which were of extraordinary magnitude, from which I concluded

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that there must have been formerly in this spot, a considerable temple.

We returned to Béit-er-Râs completely soaked by the rain, and the next day, after a storm of wind and rain, we arrived at el-Hoessan. This excursion had occupied ten days. I had yet a long way to go, and my money began to be low.—I sold my pistols, thinking I could do without them. The route by which I intended to proceed, in order to reach the mountains of Ejlûn, was reckoned very insecure, and it became necessary to wait for a more favourable opportunity of commencing that journey.

An opportunity at last presented itself, on the 6th of March, when a tolerably large party of armed peasants, went to a mill three leagues off, to carry their corn for grinding. I got two armed men also to attend me.—We passed through a forest full of game, and after three hours walk we arrived at a narrow and deep valley, through which runs a rivulet, that uniting with several others, falls into the Wady Jabis, or Wady Moush, which in its turn, opposite to Beisân (Scythopolis) is lost in the Jordan.

This valley forms the boundary between él-Bothin and Eglûn. The above-mentioned river or Wady, has been confounded, on the map of Mons. Paulus, with the Jabok. The chain of mountains of Ejlûn, is the ancient Galaaditis; they are covered with trees and brushwood, and many gall-nuts are gathered upon them.

The next day we came to Kalaat-er-Kabât, a fortress situated on the top of a tolerably high mountain. Here lives the Sheck commanding these mountains. The village of Ejlûn is close by, on a little river, and in the neighbouring rocks are great num-

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bers of caverns. We passed the night in the village Ain Jenneh, where we found some Greek Christians.

On the 8th of March we passed some mountains covered with snow, which falls here sometimes to the thickness of three or four feet, and we spent the night in the village of Sûf, by the side of which a number of springs unite to form a little river, which runs towards Jerrash, to fall afterwards into the Jerka.

The next day I had the satisfaction of seeing the important ruins of Jerrash, at a distance of two leagues to the eastward of Sûf, which ruins may be compared to those of Palmyra, or of Balbek. It is impossible to explain how this place, formerly of such manifest celebrity, can have so long escaped the notice of all lovers of antiquity.

It is situated in an open and tolerably fertile plain, through which a river runs. Before entering the town I found several sarcophaguses, with very beautiful bas-reliefs, among which I remarked one on the edge of the road, with a Greek inscription. The walls of the town are mouldered away, but one may yet trace their whole extent, which might have been three-quarters of a league or a whole one. These walls were entirely built of blocks of hewn marble. The ground within it is of unequal heigths and falls towards the river. Not a single private house remains entire. But on the other hand I observed, several public buildings, which were distinguished by a very beautiful style of architecture. I found two superb amphitheatres, solidly built of marble, with columns, niches, &c. the whole in good preservation. I found also some palaces, and three temples, one of which had a peristyle of twelve grand columns of the Corinthian order, eleven of which were still upright. In another of these

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temples I saw a column on the ground, of most beautiful polished Egyptian granite. I also found a handsome gate of the city, well preserved, formed of three arcades, and ornamented with pilastres.

The most beautiful thing that I discovered, was a long street crossed by another, and ornamented on both sides with a row of marble columns, of the Corinthian order, and one of whose extremities terminated in a semicircle, that was set round with sixty pillars of the Ionic order. At the points where the two streets cross, in each of the four angles, a large pedestal of hewn stone is visible, on which probably statues were formerly set. A part of the pavement still remains, formed of hewn stone.

To speak generally, I counted about two hundred columns, which yet partly support their entablatures, but the number of those thrown down is infinitely more considerable; I saw indeed but half the extent of the town, and a person would probably still find in the other half, on the opposite side of the river, a quantity of remarkable curiosities.

There were some Arabs about. Yussuf began to grow uneasy—and I was obliged to promise a present to my guide to induce him to stay another half hour. I cursed the want of bravery in the one, and of civility in the other, which prevented my pursuing my researches.

Jerrash can be no other than the ancient Gerasa,[f] one of the decapolitan towns. It is difficult to conceive that so much ignorance of its real situation should exist, as would allow Mons. Paulus in his map, to have placed it to the *north*-east of the northern extremity of the lake of Tiberias. I do not know

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whether any ancient geographer has made the same mistake.— From a fragment of a Greek inscription, which I copied, I am led to conclude, that several of the buildings of this town were erected under the Emperor Marcus Aurelius Antoninus. The Roman History may perhaps furnish some date in corroboration of this conjecture. It is at all events certain, that the edifices of this town, are of the age of the most beautiful Roman architecture.

After having passed the night in the village of Kitte, situated a league and a half from Jerrash, we pursued our journey on the 10th of March, and stopped, after three hours walking, at a Mohammedan village, where the only thing we could get to eat was the dried pods of the Charôb, (ceretonia siliqua).

The principal fast of Christians of the Greek church had just commenced, and as we had announced ourselves as Greeks it became necessary to conform to it.

The next day we passed the river Serka, which runs through a deep valley. It is a small stream like the Roshad, and its banks are covered with rushes, (arundo donax. Linn.) It is the Jabok of the Hebrew Historians, which forms the northern boundary of the country of the Amorites.

The Serka rises close to the road of the pilgrims for Mecca. On the other side commences the district of el-Belka. All this country, formerly so populous and flourishing, is now changed into a vast desert, in which there is only one inhabited town, called Salt, where we arrived in the afternoon.

The town of Salt is built on the slope of a little round hill, on the top of which is a fort. The rugged sides of this hill are cut

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out in terraces, and planted with vines, olive-trees, &c. which brought to mind the beautiful culture of Libanus. The town itself is inhabited by some Mohammedans, and by a great number of Christians of the Greek Church, who are free from every kind of taxation, and acknowledge no master. It appears that Salt must be the ancient Amathusa.

I had a great desire to visit Amman, once the residence of many monarchs, and which in after times became celebrated under the name of Philadelphia, among the decapolitan towns. It is situated six leagues to the eastward of Salt, on a branch of the Serka, which is called Nahhr-Amman. As the country was insecure Yussuf stayed behind, and I replaced him by two armed men, with whom I set off on the 13th of March.

The whole way we travelled, we saw villages in ruins, and met numbers of Arabs with their camels, &c. Before we came to the sources of the Nahhr-Amman, which is divided into two branches, of which the first is the most beautiful, we found in the valley, the town of Amman (civitas aquarum) situated on both sides of the river, the further part, which is the most considerable, being on the rise of a hill.

Although this town has been destroyed and deserted for many ages, I still found there some remarkable ruins, which attest its ancient splendor. Such as, 1st, a square building, very highly ornamented, which has been perhaps a mausoleum. 2ndly—The ruins of a large palace. 3dly—A magnificent amphitheatre of immense size and well preserved, with a peristyle of Corinthian pillars without pedestals. 4thly—A temple with a great number of columns. 5thly—The ruins of a large church, perhaps the see

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of a bishop in the time of the Greek emperors. 6thly—The remains of a temple, with columns set in a circular form, and which are of extraordinary size. 7thly—The remains of the ancient wall, with many other edifices.

I could only spare a short time to the examination of these objects—and I hope that any other traveller who may visit the ruins of Jerrasch, will not forget those of Amman—an ancient town which flourished long before the Greeks and Romans, and even before the Hebrews.

There were formerly in the country of the Ammonites, during the time of the Judges, twenty towns conquerred by Jephtha, (Judges xi. 33,) of which however no trace now remains.[g]

Pursuing my journey, I perceived for the first time, from the top of a mountain, the Dead Sea. I was shewn also, at the distance of some leagues to the south, the ruins of Sar, which was perhaps the ancient town of Jaser—if this latter be not another town of this district called Sir.

We passed the night with a party of Arabs, and returned the next day to Salt.

The most difficult part of the journey was still to come: considerable deserts were to be passed, and I discovered that my guide, Yussuf, never seriously intended to accompany me round the Dead Sea. He did all he could to dissuade me from undertaking the journey; but when he found that I was resolved to go without him, and that I was not frightened by the difficulties which the inhabitants of Salt assured me I should meet with, he

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complied. To get a little money I sold another of my cloaks, and on the 21st of March, we set out for Karrak, accompanied by two men and a muleteer.

We carried with us a supply of bread, as the whole country between Salt and Carrak is uninhabited, and as during lent bread and water could be our only food. During our journey we saw several towns and villages in a state of total ruin, the whole country being abandoned to the wandering Arabs. We passed near the springs of Nahhr-Sir, which I take to be the ancient Jazer. Here I saw a few tanks, but no lake. We spent the whole night with a horde of Beni-Sahhar.

On the 22nd of March we reached the ruins of Elcale, an ancient town of the Amorites, which still preserves its name. On the map of M. Paulus, it is called Elcole, and is placed on the southern side of Husban—two errors to be corrected. Husban is half a league further on; this was the royal residence of the Amorites—the Hesbon mentioned in the Song of Songs—7, 4.

Further on we came to Madaba, which in the time of Moses was called Madba. Here I found two columns near the ruins of a temple, and a well-constructed tank of hewn stone. We afterwards saw the ruins of Maéin, the ancient Bêt-Méon, to the west of which place is seen Mount-Nebo, now called Attarus. A few leagues farther I found some hot springs, which I take to be Callirhoé, and which I intend to examine hereafter. West of Maéin is the source of the small stream Serka-Maéin, which flows into the Dead Sea. I am inclined to consider the valley through which it runs, as the Baaras-Vallis, of Josephus. This

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night likewise we spent with a horde of Arabs, of the tribe of Hattabige.

The next day we crossed the small river al-Wale, which runs into the Dead Sea: Two leagues and a half farther on, we reached the ruins of Dibân, or Dibon, according to the Hebrew historians. The town is situated in the midst of a fine plain, but is incorrectly laid down in the map of M. Paulus.

We came at length to a wild and deep valley, watered by the Mujeb, (formerly Arnon). This valley forms the southern boundary of al-Balka, the ancient country of the Amorites, and the northern boundary of Karrak, that of the Moabites. We had descended into the valley, in company with a peasant of Salt, and some Arabs of the tribe of Beni-Ammr, who had joined us. These last, as soon as we had passed the river, attacked and plundered us, under the pretence of exacting a toll for the right of passage. We went on and spent the night with a horde of the tribe of Hammide.

The next day we crossed several wide plains, covered with absynthium, and other plants and shrubs. We also saw several towns in ruins, amongst which were those of Schihhan and Chmeimat. Near to this last, we observed a village consisting of twelve tents, inhabited by a few Bedouin Christians of the Greek Church, who live alternately a wandering and a sedentary life, and share with the other families connected with them, the care of their flocks. This tribe of Bedouin Christians, is distinguished by the name of al-Haddadyn from some other Christian tribes of Karrak, who are equally Nomades.

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They received us very well, and treated us with coffee and bread kneaded with oil.

After a few hours rest, we left these good people in order to reach Karrak before sunset. We crossed the ruins of Robba, (Rabbath-Moab) formerly the residence of the Kings of the Moabites. The extent of these ruins sufficiently proves its ancient importance; though I could not particularize any other object than the ruins of a palace or temple, some of the walls of which are still standing; of the peristyle there only remain two marble colums of the Corinthian order, but without pedestals.

As we approached near to Karrak, the country became more mountainous. The town itself, once a bishop's see, is on the top of a mountain, at the entrance of a deep valley. It is commanded almost on every side by mountains still higher. In its present ruined state it can only be called a hamlet. The fortress, now in a state of ruin and abandonment, was once one of the most important places of the country. The inhabitants of the city are chiefly Mohamedans, or Greek Christians; their bishop lives at Jerusalem. It commands a fine view of the Dead Sea and Jerusalem, which are perfectly distinguishable in clear weather.

The southern limit of the country of Karrak is marked by the Wady-el-Hessa, which divides it from the district of Jebbal, and which under the name of el-Karahby, empties itself into the southern extremity of the Dead Sea. Three more villages in Karrak are inhabited by Musselmen. The extent of the country of Jebbal, is about two or three days journey, but it contains only seven inhabited villages.

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I enquired for Petra, or Bedra, (for the Arabs cannot pronounce the P) and I was assured that it was at the distance of one day's journey; but I afterwards learned from the Bishop of Karrak, at Jerusalem, that Petra is two leagues distant from the Dead Sea. Further on, south of Jebbal, is the mountain of Sharah, which is likewise two days' journey in extent, and with only one inhabited village, known by the same name. Several artificial grottos have been worked in the rocks around Karrak, where wheat is preserved for ten years.

Yussuf again refused to prosecute his journey around the Dead Sea, and determined to join those of Karrak, who were going to Jerusalem for the Easter festival, and swim, with the help of skins, across the Jordan at the northern extremity of the Dead Sea. I was resolved to take the other road, round the southern extremity of this sea, and I was fortunate enough to succeed. Several inhabitants of Hebron and of Bethlehem, who had purchased from the Arabs several hundred sheep, preferred taking them to Jerusalem by the same way. For this purpose they were obliged to hire Arab guides, with whom I also made my bargain.

We set out on the 2nd of April, across a very mountainous country, where I was often obliged to alight from my horse to keep myself warm. In the afternoon we had to descend by a path into a plain at the southern extremity of the Dead Sea, called Gor-es-Sophia. This path was extremely rugged and dangerous; we reached the plain in three hours after sun-set.

The next morning we crossed the small stream of al-Karahby, which flows from the Wady-el-Höessen to this place. We were

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then on the borders of the country of Jebbal *(Gabalene)* and of Arabia-Petræa. The climate was entirely changed, and in the summer the heat must be equal to that of the tropics. Soon after we spent some hours in crossing a plain of salt, without a trace of vegetation.

We then proceeded in a westerly direction with the Dead Sea, to the north on our right. Neither Zoara nor Segor, which are on the map of M. Paulus, were to be found here; before us was a very considerable mountain composed of several layers of christallized salt. This mountain which appears to be about three leagues in length, impregnates the waters of the Dead Sea with their bitter taste.

On reaching this mountain of salt, we proceeded northwards, and soon after reached the banks of the Dead Sea. I got down from my horse, and looked in vain along the banks for shells and marine plants. Two leagues from the southern extremity of this sea, is the river Futlet, which is only fordable in the summer, and even then you have to wade during five hours through water, so impregnated with salt, as to be injurious to the legs; and this is the reason that this route is seldom taken.

The western shore of the Dead Sea is thick set with barren and high rocks. I did not observe any pillars of salt, but a large heap of stones, which our Arabs were anxious to encrease. If the history of Lot's wife be true, it is probable that instead of stones, they threw together pieces of christallized salt.

The map indicates a river on the site of Thamera, I was very sorry it was not to be found, for we were suffering extremely from thirst.

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Towards evening we followed a path up a very elevated mountain, whence I could see the greater part of the Dead Sea; in which I discovered a considerable island. We spent the night on the top of a rock, suffering under excessive thirst.

On the 4th of April we continued our route over calcareous mountains, and in the evening we reached a village of tents, inhabited by Arabs, of the tribe of Shahalin.

On the 5th of April, we were in want both of bread and of water, and were under the necessity of living upon some wild herbs. We only halted a few hours, and went on by moonlight in order to reach Jerusalem, six or seven leagues further on, on the 6th. Towards the morning we suffered extreme thirst, and to add to our misery, we descried a band of Arabs from whom we narrowly escaped.

On the morning of the 6th we reached Bethlehem, and got to Jerusalem soon after.

I was the only Christian pilgrim in company, and as such I was most hospitably received in the Convent of La Terra Santa.

I found Jerusalem a much handsomer city than I expected; but to those who visit it for any other reason than that of devotion it must be a tiresome and dull place.

To keep up my character of a pilgrim, I paid thirty-three piasters and one quarter, for leave to enter into the Holy Sepulchre, on the eve of the Easter Festival, as kept by the Greeks, and other oriental Christians. It is well known that on that day, the sacred fire is thought to come down from Heaven, and

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the Greek bishop who receives it, after a very devout prayer, is called the Bishop of Light, *(Mattrau-en-Nur)*. It was on this occasion the Bishop of Karrak.

The two cities of Jerusalem and of Bethlehem are too well-known to need any description from my pen, I will substitute in the room of it, a few particulars relating to the Dead Sea, which perhaps may be found more generally interesting.

The Dead Sea is known among the Arabs by the name of Bahheiret-Lûth, or Bahhâret-Lûth, or Birket-Lûth. It is pretended that remains of ancient buildings are still to be found in this sea. That is not probable. I enquired about it; None could give me any positive information, and several, who assured me of the fact, differed in their statements.

I have however only visited its banks during one day's journey, and its circumference is equal to six days journey. Several travellers pretend to have discovered therein the remains of ancient buildings, but their relation merit little credit. M. de Neitzschietz indeed asserts that he has seen the shape and form of this sea, from the Mount of Olives, near Jerusalem, (Jibbal-el-Tur,) which is absolutely false and impossible.

The water of the Dead Sea is salt and limpid, but as salt as the water of Saltpans. The salt which is extracted from it is of excellent quality, and is produced particularly on the eastern shore in large lumps, often of a foot thick. This process takes place in those spots which are inundated by the sea in the rainy seasons; for the Arabs do not give themselves the trouble to dig pits to assist the evaporation of the water. The stones upon the

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shore become covered as in our salt-works, with a calcareous and gypsous incrustation. The salt is only used in one part of Palestine.

I have above-mentioned the cause of the bitter taste of this water, according to which it should be continually encreasing. It is not perhaps necessary for me to point out moreover, that the many tales respecting this sea are fabulous. Such as that iron swims upon it, and light bodies sink to the bottom—that birds, in their passage over it, fall dead into the sea, &c.

The asphaltum, which is here collected, differs from that of the mines of Hasbéia, as being more porous, and as having been apparently in a fluid state. I was told at Karrak that this bitumen oozes out of some rocks on the eastern shore, and that it gradually forms a thick crust, which, on being detached by the wind, is carried along the surface of the water, and gathered by the Arabs, who convey it in large lumps to Jerusalem. These lumps are so large as to form a load for several camels. However it is only after a lapse of several years, that a quantity of asphaltum can be procured from the shores of the Dead Sea. It is here called Majar-Muzza, or the stone of Moses. When touched it is as cold as any other stone, and its appearance is like that of slate.

It is very natural that vapours should be continually rising from a surface of water, in the midst of a deep valley, surrounded by high mountains, and in which during the months of June, July, and August, the heat is equal to that under the tropics. Going one day from Jerusalem to Bethlehem, I observed a very thick smoke issuing from some furnaces of lime, charcoal, and soda,

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which the Arabs had erected upon the banks. These Arabs do not consider the vapours of the Dead Sea, more unhealthy than those of any other lake.

I did not find in this sea, any kind of sea snails or muscles, only some common snails, which I collected on the banks; I must however confess that I examined only a small part of it. There are no reeds hereabouts, but they abound at some leagues distant to the east.

The information which I have been able to collect on the apples of Sodom (solanum Sodomeum) is very contradictory and insufficient; I believe, however, that I can give a very natural explanation of the phænomenon, and that the following remark will lead to it.

Whilst I was at Karrak, at the house of a Greek curate of the town, I saw a sort of cotton, resembling silk, which he used as tinder for his match-lock, as it could not be employed in making cloth.

He told me that it grew in the plains of el-Gôr, to the east of the Dead Sea, on a tree like the fig-tree, called aoeschaer. The cotton is contained in a fruit resembling the pomegranate; and by making incisions at the root of the tree, a sort of milk is procured, which is recommended to barren women, and is called Lébbin Aoéschaer.

It has struck me that these fruits, being, as they are, without palp, and which are unknown throughout the rest of Palestine, might be the famous apples of Sodom.[h] I suppose likewise that the tree which produces it, is a sort of fromager (Bombax Linn.)

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which can only flourish under the excessive heats of the Dead Sea, and in no other district of Palestine. As to the pomegranates, I very much doubt there being any on the shores of this sea; but in the neighbourhood on the plain of Elgor, and near the surface of the soil, is found a great deal of native sulphur in round lumps of the size of a goose's egg.

I had intended to have gone directly from Jerusalem to Mount Sinai. and thence to Cairo, but I knew not whether the first of these roads was practicable or not, as all preceding travellers had gone to Mount Sinai from Egypt, or from Suez, except two travellers of old time, who had gone thither from Gaza. Being unable to get any information on this subject, either at Jerusalem or at Bethlehem, I went to Hebron, (now Chalil) where I had been led to expect I might undertake the journey. For this purpose I was told that I must get a few camels, make a provision of water and food, secure a good guide, and I was assured the journey would occupy from ten to eleven days.

I was told, likewise, that at the distance of two days journey and a half from Hebron, I should find considerable ruins of the ancient town of Abde; but that for all the rest of the journey, through Arabia-Petræa, I should see no place of habitation, I should meet with only a few tribes of wandering Arabs.

As this route was very little known, I expected to make several discoveries in mineralogy, as well as on the animals and vegetation of the country, on the manna of the desert, the ravens, the shrub which produces the balsam, the gum arabic, the locusts, Mount Seir, &c. &c.

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Perhaps this road which passes through the middle of Arabia-Petræa, was the ancient commercial road, from Jerusalem to Ezion-geber, on the eastern arm of the Arabian Gulf.

Previous to undertaking this Journey, I proposed to make a second tour round the Dead Sea, in order to examine its situation, nature, &c. and to rectify, by my own experience, the absurd and ridiculous reports which monks and credulous travellers had propagated on this subject. But my fates had decided otherwise, for, from having been too long exposed to the sun, in completing my astronomical observations, I fell seriously ill, and during the space of a fortnight, could think of nothing but the means of my recovery. In the interim the favourable moment for making the tour of the Dead Sea went by, and I determined to defer the journey till after the violent heats.

I left Jerasalem on the 25th of May, 1806, to go to Jaffa, where I embarked a few days afterwards for St. Jean d'Arc, where I now am.

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NOTES.

Note A. page 8.

Peræa, from περα, extending to all the country east of the Jordan, but more particularly to the district reaching from the torrent Arnon, northward to M. Galaad. Moabitis seems to belong to the country due east of the Dead Sea. Ammonitis to the region adjoining it on the north, to which follow, in succession, Galaaditis, Batanæa (still preserved in Batinia probably the Basan of the Scriptures) and Aurauitis: The latter separated from the Lake of Tiberias by Gaulonitis probably so named from Golun, the city of refuge, appointed by Moses, (Deut. iv. 4). Trachonitis belongs to the diverging branches of M. Libanus, between Damascus, Cesarea, and M. Hermon, a rough and mountainous country, as the name imports.

The Decapolis consisted of Gadara, Scythopolis, Gerasa, Hippos, Canatha, Philadelphia, Pella, Capitolias, Dium, and Abyla.

Note B. page 11.

Haurân in its fetility, the depth of its soil, completely devoid of stones, and in the heat of its atsmosphere, bears a greater resemblance to Egypt than to other parts of Syria. The fertility of course depends on the quantity of rain which annually falls there; and various fables are propagated regarding the multiplication of grain when sown. There is some authority, however, for believing that the wheat yields 25 for 1, and usually attains the height of 5½ or 6 feet. The district produces wheat, barley, cotton and other articles.

Ladja is possibly a corruption of Laodicea, which was in this neighbourhood.

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Note C. page 16.

The fountain Phiala, has also been regarded as the source of the Jordan, which, like most other rivers, has several sources contributing to form its stream. Milton assigns it two.

> ——————Here the double-founted stream
> Jordan, true limit eastward.
>
> *Paradise Lost. B.* 12. *L.* 144.

The Jordan is known to the modern Syrians, by the name of Nahr-es-Sharié; to the Arabian geographers by that of Nahr-el-Arden. It is augmented in winter, and still more in spring, by the snow which dissolves on the adjacent mountains; but its ordinary depth is about 12 English feet.

Note D. page 21.

The Thermæ, repaired by Jezzar, are probably Emmaus, so named by the Greeks from the Hebrew Chammath. Tiberias, according to D'Anville from St. Jerome, was built on the site of Cineroth, and received its name from Tiberius, Son of Herod Antipas.

Note E. page 23.

Seetzen having ascertained that the Shariat-Manadra does not flow into the Lake of Tiberias, but into the Jordan, it becomes certain that Gamala must have been to the northward of the river; but as Josephus, in his particular account of the seige, mentions that it was near the *bottom* of the lake, and opposite to Tarichæa, and as Seetzen says, that Phik was near the *middle* of the lake—it appears more probable that Phik should be the ancient Hippos, rather than Gamala.

Note F. pages 29, 32.

These surmises of M. Seetzen, relative to the position of the ancient towns, are deserving of further investigation.

In all the former maps, Gadara, is placed much nearer the lake of Tiberias, than the situation of M'kes.

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St. Mark, (c. 5, v. 1.) and St. Luke, (c. 8, v. 26.) also describing the miraculous cure of the dæmoniac, by our Saviour, as soon as he landed in the country of the Gadarenes, represent the people as coming immediately out of the city to see what was done, whereby it appears to have been very near the lake. St. Matthew, (c. 8, v. 28,) relates the same story as having happened in the country of the Gergesenes, and to reconcile the two accounts, many persons have supposed that the neighbouring town bore the name of Gadara, and the district that of the Gergesenes—which may possibly be the sole reason for the position of Gadara in all our former maps. It is, however, equally reconcileable to the accounts of the Evangelists, to suppose that Gergesa, was the name of the place near the lake, and Gadaris, that of the district; the principal town of which called Gadara, might have been at a considerable distance. Josephus, speaking of Galilee, b. 3, c. 3. says, προς εω δε Ιππηνη και Γαδαρις αποτεμνεται shewing that a district bore that name.

With respect to the important ruins of Jerrasch, (mentioned page 32) which Seetzen supposes to have been Gerasa, much further information is greatly to be desired.

D'Anville following many other geographers, has placed Gerasa far to the north-east of the lake of Tiberias; but several circumstances induce a belief that in the neighbourhood of where Seetzen found these ruins, a town called Gerasa formerly existed.

Josephus (b. 2, c. 18) speaks of Gerasa as near to Pella and Seythopolis; and in describing Peræa, (b. 3, c. 3.) he says it reached from Machærus to Pella, having the latter city in its northermost point. He adds, also, και Γερασοις αποτεμνεται still indicating that Gerasa and Pella were near together.

Cellarius and others, to reconcile perhaps these differences, have supposed two places of this name. After placing one in the Batanæa, he adds, Urbem Gerasam, ab Ammiano laudatam, in his oris *post Bataneam* Hieronymus locat, quasi eandem quæ Gerasenorum civitas dicitur, juncta monti Galaad. Et ipse (de Heb. loc.) Arabiæ urbem insignem vocat. Sic *aliam oportet* hanc esse a Ptolemæi *Gerasa*. Philadelphia quidem non videtur longius abfuisse, &c.

Gerasa is mentioned by Gibbon, as one of the walled towns to which the Greeks retired for protection from the Saracens, but its position is not at all ascertained.

It certainly appears strange that Seetzen passing so near to the situation of Pella should have heard nothing of that town, and it has been surmised that these very ruins of Jerrasch, might have belonged to it. Pella was of considerable importance in the Decapolis, and is mentioned very frequently by Josephus, by Jerome, and many other old writers. To that place, after the destruction of Jerusalem, the Nazarenes retired; (Euseb, l. 3, c. 5,—Le Clerc. Hist. eccl. p: 605.)

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"Where," says Gibbon, "that ancient church languished during sixty years, in solitude and obscurity." The Bishop and the Church of Pella retained the title of Jerusalem.

That the ruins discovered by Seetzen, were near to the situation of Pella is evident, from the former quoted passage of Josephus (b. 3, c. 3.) but the present name of Jerash leads so naturally to Gerasa, that it is hardly possibly to attend to any other conjecture.

Note G. page 36.

The fact here mentioned by Seetzen, is probably true, that no traces remain of the twenty cities conquered by Jephtha; but having advanced so short a way into the country of Ammon, our journalist was not in a situation to verify what he asserts. The verse he quotes (Judg. 11. 33.) runs thus—"And Jephtha smote them (the children of Ammon) from Aroer even till thou come to Minnith, even twenty cities, and unto the plain of the vineyards, with a very great slaughter," &c.

Now Aroer was on the bank of the river Arnon, and at a considerable distance from Ammon, or Philadelphia (see Josh. 13—9, 10, 16) and since also Seetzen knew not the direction towards Minnith, he knew not where to look for the twenty cities.

It may not here be impertinent to request the reader to turn to the 13th chapter of Joshua, where he will find the country described that was allotted to the two tribes and a half beyond Jordan. He may possibly be surprised to see how many places are there named, of which traces and memorials, according to M. Seetzen, are, even at this remote period, to be found.

Note H. page 39,

A species of Asclepias, probably the Asclepias-Gigantea. The remark of M. Seetzen is corroborated by a traveller, who passed a long time in situations where this plant is very abundant. The same idea occurred to him when he first saw it in 1792, though he did not then know that it existed near the Lake Asphaltites. The umbella, somewhat like a bladder, containing from half a pint to a pint, is of the same colour with the leaves, a bright green, and may be mistaken for an inviting fruit, without much stretch of imagination. That, as well as the other parts, when green, being cut or pressed, yields a milky juice, of a very acrid taste: But in winter, when dry, it contains a yellowish dust, in appearance re-

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sembling certain fungi, common in South Britain; but of pungent quality, and said to be particularly injurious to the eyes. The whole so nearly corresponds with the description given by Solinus (Polyhistor), Josephus, and others of the Poma Sodomæ, allowance being made for their extravagant exaggerations, as to leave little doubt on the subject.

The same plant is to be seen on the sandy borders of the Nile, above the first cataracts, the only vegetable production of that barren tract. It is about three feet in height, and the fruit exactly answering the above description, &c.

The downy substance found within the stem, is of too short staple probably for any manufacture, for which its silky delicate texture, and clear whiteness might oherwise be suitable.

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